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It's Time to Get Your Flu Vaccine!

Filed under [FLEET AND THE FLEET MARINE FORCE](#), [FORCE HEALTH AND SAFETY](#), [PUBLIC HEALTH](#) [\(NO COMMENTS\)](#)

By Lt. Robert Miller, Environmental Health Officer, Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center



Flu vaccination can reduce flu illness, doctor visits, and missed work due to flu as well as prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

The flu, or influenza, is a viral respiratory illness. It is highly contagious and is usually spread by the coughs and sneezes of a person who is infected. You can also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching your mouth or nose. Adults are contagious one day before getting symptoms and up to 7 days after becoming ill. [This means that you can spread the influenza virus before you even know you are infected.](#) While flu outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time flu activity peaks between December and February, although activity can last as late as May.

According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), between 5 percent and 20 percent of Americans get the flu each year. In the United States more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 die annually because of flu. Common flu symptoms include a high temperature, cold sweats, headache, severe fatigue, and aching joints or limbs. While the majority of flu cases are not life-threatening, some people are at high risk for serious complications. These include young children, pregnant women, people 65 and older and people with certain medical conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart disease.

The single best way to prevent the flu is to receive a flu vaccination. There are two types of


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vaccinations, the flu shot and the nasal-spray flu vaccine. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illness, doctor visits, and missed work due to flu as well as preventing flu-related hospitalizations and deaths. For those at high risk for complications, getting the flu vaccine is especially important. Navy Medicine policy states that the flu vaccine is mandatory for all active and reserve component personnel, and is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.

If you have flu symptoms or think you have the flu, stay at home and try to avoid contact with other people. Make sure to keep warm and rest, consume plenty of liquids, and eat if you are able. Since the flu is caused by a virus, [antibiotics](#) won't do any good unless the flu has led to another illness. Some symptoms, such as headache and body pains, may be alleviated through the use of acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

For additional information please visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's Influenza page at: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/program-and-policy-support/Pages/Influenza.aspx>

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